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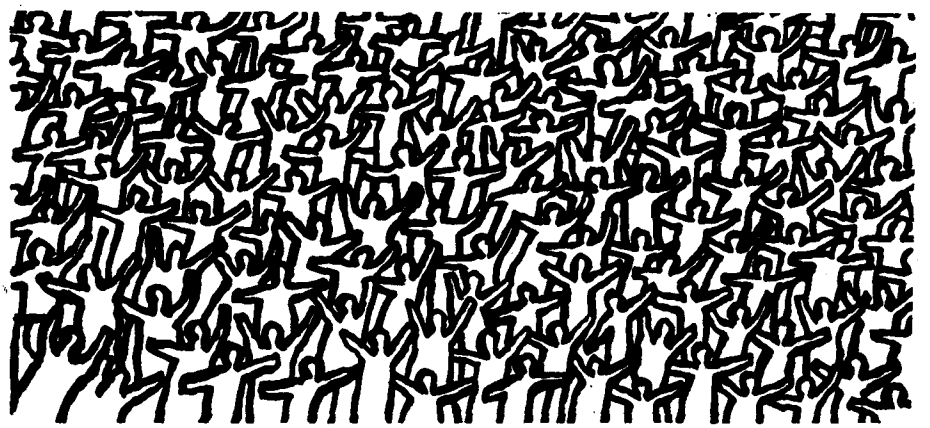
ATTICA: VIETNAM AT HOME



TWO VIEWS
JOHN LEO
PETER STEINFELS

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THE CONDITIONS OF FREEDOM REVISITED
JAMES V. SCHALL

THE POLITICS OF GULLIBILITY
THOMAS M. CONRAD

BERNSTEIN'S 'MASS' MEDIA
RALPH THIBODEAU

SCREEN: THE NUN'S STORY
COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

MIGHT THE SYNOD SURPRISE?
HENRY TEN KORTENAAR THE EDITORS

ABBIE HOFFMAN, CHRISTIAN ORIGINS, FORD MADOX FORD

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NEWS & VIEWS

A Modest Proposal

The issue of the church's wealth has been raised anew in Latin America—this time by a cardinal; the result is a controversy running the length of South and Central America.

Initiator of the controversy was Cardinal Maurer of Sucre, who in a letter to Catholics of Bolivia, asked whether "in the light of so much hunger and misery" the church's wealth in Bolivia can "continue to be kept without sin."

Cardinal Maurer argued that this wealth—estimated at $150 million—no longer has social utility either for the church or the faithful, and is only a source for "very harsh criticism."

He said that the church should not only "give up its great buildings, certain rectories and religious houses, certain Catholic colleges," but also its jewels and treasures, with proceeds being devoted to the "urgent needs of our people."

The Cardinal suggested the construction of public housing, roads, industries, etc. "The church must appear poor, and be poor, and be at the service of the poor," he maintained.

Reaction has been mixed.

Archbishop Brandoa Villela, president of CELAM, the Latin American episcopal conference, rejoindered that the "giving away" of the church's goods would resolve nothing, that the key to Latin America's problems was changing its socio-economic structures. Besides, he added, a distinction must be made between superfluous goods and those which are part of the cultural patrimony.

In kindred vein, the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, Cardinal Araujo de Sales, commented that it was urgent for people to change the way in which they think about cathedrals.

On the other hand, there have been strongly positive reactions.

The Canadian OMI's at Oruro in Western Bolivia, who have been at odds with the Cardinal, elected to place the lands and buildings belonging to them at the disposal of public schools and hospitals.

In Panama, Auxiliary Bishop Lewis announced the intention of the church in his country to sell its possessions and build public housing.

And in Mexico, the secretary of the bishops' conference, Msgr. Vazquez Corona, revealed that the conference is planning to sell numerous works of art in order to help the poor.

As positive response spread, Cardinal Maurer took his idea a step further. His proposal, he declared, was valid for the church throughout the world.

No More 'Continuum'

In case you're wondering why no issues lately of *Continuum*, the prestigious independent quarterly, know that the magazine is dead. It was put to rest, quietly and without public word, some months ago by its sponsor and underwriter, St. Xavier College of Chicago.

Continuum, a journal of the general humanities with a religious perspective, had 3,000 subscribers at $7 per annum; Xavier made up the cost difference: $7,000 to $9,000 a year.

This is hardly the salary of a well-paid janitor, but it was too dear for the college's leadership.

"They don't see the value of a magazine that is a mere prestige item," said Justus George Lawler, "and that didn't create student interest and other things immediately useful."

Lawler, who edited *Continuum* since its founding in 1963, is convinced that with a couple of minor accessions (office space, two student helpers) he could have kept the magazine going at half its income and no cost to the college. But two written proposals elicited no answer, and phone calls resulted in the "run-around."

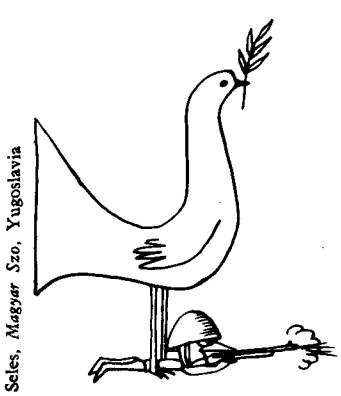
CIA, AID and Religion

Does the "excessive entanglement" clause of the Supreme Court's parochial school decision provide a vehicle for getting at CIA and AID involvement with church-related groups beyond the continental limits?

Glen L. Archer of Americans United for Separation of Church and State thinks so, and thus is asking the House Special Subcommittee on Intelligence to look into links between these Government agencies and the Jesuits and the Catholic church in Latin America.

Archer bases his request on a doctoral thesis of David E. Mutchler, recently published in hard-back by Praeger under the title *The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America.*

Among much else, Mutchler, a former Jesuit scholastic, charges that the CIA gave support to the church's successful campaign against Chile's Salvador Allende in 1964, and that AID grants help finance the idea of a Catholic ethic as a requisite to Latin American development.



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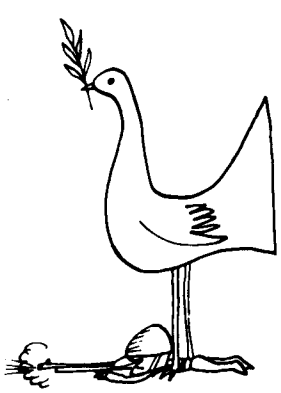

Discretion on Celibacy

The Peruvian bishops raised Roman eyebrows with their proposal to the Synod asking the ordination of "mature, properly prepared married men."

But the bishops weren't near so direct as the clergy who drafted the study on which the bishops acted.

The clergy recommended that active priests living in concubinage be allowed to marry and continue in the ministry.

The "concubinage recommendation," according to Latinamerica Press, was "occasioned by the fact that many Peruvian priests, especially in the mountain regions, live with women who have borne them children. This causes a situation of hypocrisy because if the priest marries the woman, he can no longer exercise his ministry, thus forcing the common-law arrangement."

Odds and Ends

—Renewal has put yet another church-related business in trouble: nunswear. "When all this started, we looked upon the change as a tremendous opportunity," said Edward S. Jamieson of Jamieson, Inc., Chicago, the nation's largest nunswear company. "All communities would get new habits." Instead, so many nuns took to secular clothes that nunswear people must diversify or die. To stay alive, Jamieson is now into corsets, girdles, bras slips and panties.

—The Maryland House of Delegates meant well; it was phraseology that undid the gesture. Its resolution honoring pioneer suffragist Susan B. Anthony began: "For a woman, Susan B. Anthony made outstanding contributions to the history of our country. . . ." JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Suburbia's Responsibility

Black Jack, Mo.

To the Editors: As a white, middle-class citizen of the city of Black Jack, Missouri, I feel obliged to declare my unqualified support of Mr. Rosapepe's analysis [Aug. 20] of the housing situation in our fair town, as well as similar situations across the nation. Until affluent suburbia acknowledges its responsibility for the economic disparity of the middle and lower classes, and the wealth of social and racial problems which such inequality promulgates, our cities will continue to deteriorate into uninhabitable hellholes.

Obviously, we cannot hope to solve the immense problems of urban America merely by establishing low-cost housing in suburban areas. What we can do is begin to attempt, at the gut level, a solution to the righteous complaints of a class we have long managed to oppress. We must take action to alleviate the poverty which our affluence has instigated, even if it be (God forbid!) in our own home town. SUSAN M. O'CONNOR

The Nameless Dead

Newark, N. J.

To the Editors: It goes on and on: the accounts of the My Lai massacre coming out of the Medina trial we have heard before. Even when we encounter new testimony, more unspeakable bestiality, there is a certain sameness about the whole terrible affair, and a numb resistance sets in, and we are barely moved. We must not allow this to happen.

In a recent *New York Times,* Homer Bigart quotes from John M. Small, a machine gunner with Medina's company: "The boy was 5 or 6 years old, bleeding from face and hands. Captain Medina passed by, followed by his command group. The last member of that command group shot the boy."

This event took place almost two years ago, a long way off, in a foreign

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HOPE FOR THE SYNOD

A Synod is to bishops as war is to generals: too important to be left just to them. To many of our friends and readers, we know, a gathering of bishops seems about as relevant as a convention of Edsel dealers, but while we can understand and even sympathize with this point of view, we do not share it. Take, specifically, the current Bishops' Synod, discussed elsewhere in this issue by Henry ten Kortenaar. Creation of the Bishops' Synod represented the major structural change made by the second Vatican Council, and its establishment was at least potentially an important landmark in the history of the church. The Synod is based on the Council's overwhelming approval of the principle of collegiality, the idea that the bishops are not simply agents of the Pope but share supreme authority in the church with him, and the implications of this thesis, ecumenical and otherwise, are far-reaching.

This is not to say that all has been well with the implementation of the Synod—far from it. Episcopal representation to the two previously held Synods tended to be conservative, the agendas were largely made in Rome, and the Vatican tried with considerable success to keep a tight rein on what took place. No one therefore would claim that the Synod up till now has been a perfect or even a very good example of the bishops' powers as co-governors with the Pope of the universal church. Nonetheless, it is a start, and it is important precisely for that reason. If the Bishops' Synods become reasonably successful, they could spell the beginning of the end for overcentralized authority in the church—something for which we should all be grateful.

This result will not be accomplished, however, by the Bishops' Synod as it now exists. Instead of meeting every two years at the pleasure of the Pope, the Synod should meet to advise him on a regular schedule and often. Further, a couple of dozen bishops from around the world should be chosen by their fellows to act as a permanent body ready to consult with the Pope at all times. The Pope needs and now has advisers—who better for this task than representatives of the world's bishops? Ideally, the Synod should be *the* body to be consulted by the Pope in matters of discipline and doctrine. If this were done, the Synod could then take on many of the old functions of the now archaic College of Cardinals, meeting

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regularly with the Pope and perhaps ultimately electing his successor—a procedure that would make far more sense than the present method, in which old men picked by one Pope choose another of their number to be the next Pope. And while all this was coming about, the collegial idea should be extended, with the Synod's example of shared authority spreading through all levels of the church—the Orthodox, for example, take lay participation in the synodal life of the church for granted.

The Synod, then, is important, at least in theory. Now the crucial thing is that practice be vastly improved. On this score the make-up of the American delegation is disappointing, but surprises are always possible, and the other bishops at the Synod should represent a wider variety of views. The shape of the Synod is still flexible; its accomplishments in two previous sessions have been modest enough, but there is still a chance to transform the institution into the influential force it could be in the on-going life of the church. But if this is to be done, at least some of the bishops must speak up and express the real concerns of their priests and people; it is essential that the Synod take steps to create effective two-way communication between Rome and the local churches. If it is to succeed, in short, the Synod must give voice to the genuine, often frustrated aspirations inside the church for reform. If a good number of the bishops assembled in Rome appreciate this fact and their collegial role, the Bishops' Synod can be used in the years ahead to achieve some of the high hopes raised by Vatican II. If the bishops fail in this, they will for many people simply be burying those hopes a little deeper.

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'ANGRY BISHOPS' IN THE WINGS

MIGHT THE SYNOD SURPRISE?

Since the closure of the Vatican Council, six years ago, every two years representatives of all bishops' conferences have gathered in Rome to assist Pope Paul with their advice on current church problems. The original idea was that these Synods of Bishops would be convoked whenever the Pope would find it useful to do so; but the problems which have come to light at the Council are so many, and on the other hand the bishops have so strongly insisted on their right to be at least consulted towards their solution, that after the meeting of 1969 it was decided to keep the two years' period as a normal rule. On the agenda of the third Synod of Bishops, scheduled to begin at the end of September, are two important questions: the Priestly Ministry and Justice in the World.

Both problems have been hotly debated, especially since the Vatican Council, and it cannot be said that they are close to a solution; but in various places new directions have been explored and different approaches have been suggested, which do not always agree with the traditional Roman view. At this stage it would be absurd to expect definite solutions from the Synod, also in view of its purely advisory function. But what may and must be expected is, that it will forcefully bring to the attention of the Holy See the needs and views of the local churches, even at the risk of saying things Roman ears do not like to hear. In both areas covered by the Synod agenda the problems have by now grown so large that they can no longer be overlooked or hushed up without seriously damaging the credibility of the church.

The results of the two preceding Synods do not, perhaps, justify even this modest expectation, but it may be easier to have a polite discussion on the relations between bishops and Pope or on the theology of collegiality, than on problems which really hurt: priests leaving the ministry, empty seminaries, or the bitter discovery that in a situation of hunger and injustice the church has nothing to offer but empty hands and pious phrases. A bishop of Central America, who has one of his best priests kidnaped because his activities are unwelcome to the landowners and the government, is more likely to "forget himself" and say what he thinks, than if asked to give his opinion on the juridical nature of the episcopal college, which has become a frustrating topic anyway. Or some African or Asian bishop may have a thing or two to say on racism and imperialism his Western colleagues have never yet thought of. In other words, we may yet see some "angry bishops," and the third Synod would be an excellent occasion. It would be a memorable Synod indeed.

How likely is this to happen? As for the delegates themselves, it is difficult to assess their personal inclinations. There are few names of international renown, but one has the impression that most bishops' conferences have made a very "prudent" choice, electing those of their members who would least embarrass Roman authorities. On the other hand, in various countries the bishops have seriously studied one or both of the subjects under discussion and have given their delegates specific instructions, or even alternative documents (e.g., the papers on justice from Chile and Peru). In many cases the local communities, priests and laity, have been consulted (though it is not always clear what use has been made of their opinions). But most important of all: many local

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churches and their bishops have been struggling with these problems for years and are no longer interested in academic discussions and theoretical answers. These are at least a few conditions which might enliven the present Synod.

There are also some severe limitations. The main one is the fact that the discussion must be based on the documents prepared by the Roman secretariat of the Synod, which were distributed, moreover, at a very late date (February and May, 1971, respectively). In the short time available (the Synod is expected to last four or five weeks at most), the delegates may criticize, amend or even reject them, but they will hardly be able to produce entirely new texts. Therefore whatever may come out of the Synod will not be representative in the same sense in which the Council documents could be said to represent the views of the world episcopate. About the intrinsic value of the preparatory papers we must now leave the judgment to the bishops, but there is one characteristic that can be pointed out: they leave open an infinite number of escape-routes, which make it possible, if the bishops are so inclined, to avoid the hard questions and the hard answers. The fact that several bishops are *not* so inclined may again make for a lively debate.

The document on the priesthood excludes from the outset any "considerations which spring from the sciences of man (such as history, sociology, psychology . . .)" though recognizing that "some contingent elements of the priestly ministry either have a relation with some sociological elements, or are not immune from a certain commixture with psychological realities" (the reader who does not believe that anybody can write or even think such a phrase has but to look up the Latin text). By this simple shortcut the crisis of the priesthood is reduced to a problem of faith, so that only the theology of the ministry remains to be settled, with a few "practical questions" thrown in to satisfy any demands from "outside." It seems highly unlikely that all bishops will accept this procedure. Nobody expects the Synod to embark upon a sociological or psychological discussion, but to dismiss out of hand the findings of such studies as have been made, e.g., for the U.S. and Belgian episcopates, would mean to miss the entire human dimension of the crisis—not to mention the fact that these studies (and history as well) pose some serious theological questions the document does not touch upon (or if it does, only to reaffirm the traditional answers).

Of the practical questions, the most spectacular is certainly the one on celibacy. It can easily be predicted that even the Dutch bishops will not insist on their proposal of January, 1970, to make clerical celibacy optional, but there seems to be a general tendency to accept the only possible opening left at the moment, the ordination of mature married men ("viri probati"). Though the document only mentions "true and urgent necessity" as a reason for such a decision, several bishops also think of the specific contribution these married men can make to pastoral care. If this principle were to be accepted by the Synod, the way would be clear for further developments. It should be added that many think the question has been blown up out of all proportion in comparison to other problems, such as the possibility of professional activities outside the ministry and the political involvement of priests. Some Latin American bishops have already decided to waste no more energy on the question and are tacitly permitting married priests to continue in the ministry, as long as their communities do not raise objections.

The much shorter document on "Justice in the World" has been much praised for its indictment of the unjust oppression of the poor and of the underdeveloped nations and for its proclamation of the right of freedom and development for all. It is sadly typical that such obvious and, in their vagueness, quite innocuous statements cause a sensation as soon as they are made in ecclesiastical documents. It can only mean that the traditional political agnosticism which has enabled the church to come to terms with every political regime, as long as its rights were respected, has been identified with Catholic teaching, to the extent that even the most timid criticism must seem a "change of course." This may be so on the local plane in some parts of the world, but it does not appear from the document. If these statements are to have a meaning, it must indeed be political, and they would call for political action. Instead, the main task the paper indicates for the church is that of "education," and more specifically the teaching of its "social doctrine." (The mention here of "social doctrine" is again a dangerous shortcut, for it tacitly supposes that the church has such a thing as a coherent "social doctrine" and that this has relevance in the present context, which is to be proven first). In any case, this is too modest a conclusion, and many "Third-World" bishops, especially Latin Americans, will not be satisfied with it. In their situation it is not enough to seek the causes of present political ills in the sinfulness of the human race and their remedy in the individual conversion. There are precise political responsibilities (of the church, too) which must be denounced, and a battle must be fought for the liberation of man, which can only be won by political means. As long as the Synod does not admit this, at least in principle (leaving the concrete application to the local churches), its statement on justice can only be another example of wishful thinking, of which we have had too many already in recent years.

There is every reason to follow the present Synod with great interest, for there is some hope that it may reveal, however dimly, a new image of the church and, with it, of the Christian—and the priest—in the world.

HENRY TEN KORTENAAR

(Henry ten Kortenaar is a translator and writer living in Rome.)

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OFFICIAL INTRANSIGENCE

ATTICA: VIETNAM AT HOME

Timetable

Of a Bloodbath

Governor Rockefeller's decision to cut off negotiations and storm Attica prison was apparently made early Sunday, less than 48 hours after some of the observer-negotiators had arrived, a few of them at the Governor's own request.

By 2 p.m. there was a feeling among negotiators and reporters that Rockefeller had already yielded to pressure for a strong law-and-order stance and was determined to attack. The negotiating committee, drawn from a larger group of prominent observers, made a statement at 2:05 that they "were now convinced a massacre of prisoners and guards may take place."

Commissioner Oswald effectively broke off negotiations at 2:30 with a "request" that amounted to an ultimatum: would the inmates recognize the necessity of releasing all hostages as a precondition for any further negotiation?

Committee members—apparently all of them—frantically phoned the Governor and begged him to come to the prison and meet with them (not with the prisoners, as Rockefeller would claim later) before any attack. Congressman Herman Badillo, who knew his man, framed his last desperate appeal to Rockefeller in the narrowest political terms: if you come here and give us one more day, you will be able to tell the public you did everything possible to avoid a bloodbath. Rockefeller refused.

Bobby Douglass, the Governor's man on the scene, also refused to see the committee members, who were 15 feet away at the time. By 6:30 p.m., all phones available to the committee members had been cut off, and by 7 p.m. they were incarcerated. Oswald told the group, which included several nationally famous names, that they were "prisoners of the state," and officials were sufficiently menacing that Badillo said "We were concerned we would be shot by the guards."

After a second ultimatum, the attack began at 9:48 Monday morning. At this writing, the ferocity of the assault is just beginning to be understood, and it is not yet possible to tell whether the attackers followed orders or simply went berserk.

Under a thick tear gas cover, in rain and mist, more than 700 troopers and guardsmen attacked the prison, firing thousands of rounds at everyone who moved and many who didn't. One rescued hostage said the gunfire was so heavy that he assumed machine guns were being used. Another hostage, Richard Miller, referring to the enthusiasm of the attackers, said: "I had to beg the troopers not to shoot me." Troopers blasted away with 9-pellet shotguns, not exactly discriminating weapons, especially with visibility so poor. In the end, the attackers killed 36 men and wounded between 300 and 350 (until investigators were allowed in, the state would put the wounded total at 29). At this writing, with the state talking of buried bombs and "hand-to-hand combat" and hinting to a furious press corps that there may have been buried guns, there is still no clear evidence that the attackers met any resistance at all. (Though one trooper said he spotted a bottle thrower, and shot him to death with his arm in the air.)

The hostages who were shot to death had been bound, standing up, but bent over with wrists tied to ankles—not a threatening posture and one that might have spared them, tear gas and all, if the attackers hadn't been so zealous. Many of those killed and wounded—90 percent according to one medical examiner—had been shot in the back. A large number had serious elbow injuries, indicating they were shot in panicky attempts to crawl away from the attackers.

Rockefeller's role throughout the disaster was instructive. During the entire four days, he refused to come to the prison and meet with negotiators. After the attack, he implied that the responsibility for the raid was Oswald's (by saying he "completely supported" the decision—*i.e.*, somebody else's). While evading the press for two days, he put out a George-Wallace-style press release blaming the tragedy on outside agitators and an-

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nounced an investigation that would be limited to the *causes* of the uprising, and thus presumably exclude the crucial five days and his own role in them.

On Tuesday he announced a committee to protect the constitutional rights of Attica prisoners, but refused to allow doctors, attorneys or observers access to the inmates to ward off the predictable post-attack beatings of prisoners by guards. (A federal judge ordered immediate access for attorneys, doctors and nurses. After some stalling legal tactics by the state, outsiders gained entrance to the prison on Friday and discovered that widespread beatings had occurred.) Rockefeller also announced that President Nixon had phoned, on his own initiative, to offer support. The White House said Rockefeller had phoned asking for support, had talked to Haldeman because Nixon was in a cabinet meeting, and that Nixon had returned the call later.

By Wednesday, finally forced into a press conference by the revelation that the hostages had died by gunfire, Rockefeller called the raid "a strong affirmative action," dropped the outside agitator theory, and said he felt the attack had gone much better than he thought it would (meaning, supposedly, that he expected more than 40 people to die and still ordered the assault). When reporters pressed him on why negotiations had to be cut off so abruptly, aides ended the conference and the Governor disappeared.

What was the rush to raid the prison? According to all reports flowing out of the prison, the hostages were in no imminent danger. They reported on a daily basis (and after the assault) that they were well cared for and protected. They had blankets while their inmate-guards did not. A tight cordon of Muslims protected the hostages around the clock. The Muslims, who were less concerned with third-world rhetoric than with specific reforms at Attica (down to a fierce demand for "less pork in prison food"), were in control by force of numbers. Though Tom Wicker's reports of complete unity among the inmates seems to be exaggerated, it now looks as though the least bellicose faction was in the ascendancy right up until the raid. The first report from prisoners, interviewed separately, are that the leaders were looking for a graceful way to back down from the amnesty demand when the ultimatum came.

It would seem to be an obvious principle of diplomacy that if you want to win, you must avoid appearing to humiliate. If the ultimatum had allowed more time, and included a sweetener or two—say, a promise of immediate outside observers to deter reprisals, and a promise not to seek the death penalty for all leaders because of the death of guard William Quinn—things might have turned out differently. Certainly, it would have strengthened the hand of those more interested in reform than a raid.

Instead we got a bloodbath that has all the appearances of an instant history of Vietnam: the credibility gap of erroneous atrocity reports, massive retaliation, outside aggressor theories, the apparent feeling that negotiation is somehow unseemly because we are in the right, and Rockefeller and Oswald insisting that "they had no alternative" and were fighting "for the concept of a free society."

The concept of a free society does not seem to have been notably fortified. But the tradition of high-noon machismo politics was. JOHN LEO

How We Perceive The Enemy

"There was much more at stake than just Attica," said the local state senator. "This was done to benefit our society."

The morning after the bloody assault on Cellblock D, my colleagues and I puzzled over the painful question, what would *you* have done, sifting through the mass of incomplete and often conflicting reports. All of us had caught the state senator's remark and had been struck by some note in it, perhaps the air of stoic resignation, the claim of noble necessity, which reminded us of the classic summation of the war in Vietnam, "We had to destroy the village to save it."

Another day passed, and we were instructed once again in the lesson of official deception. The hostages had not had their throats slit, no one had been castrated—contrary to the vivid descriptions provided by prison authorities. The dead hostages and the dead prisoners had perished together, from the bullets of the invading forces. "We had to kill the hostages to save them." As the week went on, the analogies between Vietnam and Attica became more and more inescapable.

The point of talking about Attica and Vietnam together is not to grind two axes with the same stone, nor to simplify life by forced and facile comparisons—no one should have to be told how different in nature and magnitude are these two horrors—but to recognize how ingrained is the American pattern of reacting to revolt.

One begins with a particular perception of the sources of discontent. In Vietnam, we were told, the revolutionaries were a tiny minority who forced the cooperation of the masses through terror. At Attica, explained a prison chaplain, there were a hard-core group of 150-200 revolutionaries; the 1,200 prisoners who joined the revolt did so because "there was pressure put on them." Ideological fanaticism and outside influence are also named as causes of the revolt. What is not named are the genuine needs and felt demands of the average prisoner. Thus, if the revolutionaries, the ideologists, and the nefarious influences from the outside could be segregated out of the general population—and it is assumed that the bad guys and the good guys are readily distin-

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guishable—then the problem would be well on its way to solution. Thus strategic hamlets in Vietnam. Thus the proposal for a separate, super-secure prison for "hard-core, militant, Marxist revolutionaries," made by the Catholic priest who is the past president of the American Correctional Chaplains Association.

At Attica, as in the case of Vietnam, we saw a government haunted by a domino theory. If the revolt succeeded in this instance, would all prisons revolt? Did law and order throughout society depend on the settlement here? It seems clear that considerations like these prevented the minimization of death and suffering in Attica itself from being the main criterion of the decision to attack or continue negotiations, just as the concrete death and suffering caused by the war in Vietnam was subordinated in the process of decision-making to abstract and hypothetical considerations of strategy and "face."

Then, too, there is the pressure from the hawks: the prison staff and the politicians who oppose negotiations and concessions. (Incidentally, I have no way of evaluating this judgment, but I know that at least one man who has long worked in New York prisons believes that there are people employed in the prison system who are willing to provoke turmoil in order to embarrass their superiors or rivals.) Negotiations may be undertaken but with little faith in a positive outcome. They are partially a response to the pressure of publicity, and are resented as such. The "enemy," it is suspected, will only use the negotiations as a means of enhancing their military position. This suspicion is grounded in the fact that the government is itself using the negotiations as a cover for preparing *its* military position. Besides, what good are negotiations if one believes that the men negotiating for the other side are not rational leaders but fanatical, unrepresentative usurpers?

This distrust in negotiation is matched by a trust in firepower. The difficulties and risks of negotiating—and who would deny, whether speaking of Attica or Vietnam, that they are quite real?—are perceived clearly. But the drawbacks of armed intervention are disregarded, and when the military instrument inevitably proves to be blunt and indiscriminating, when atrocities occur, when it turns out that massive force cannot distingush the "innocent" from the "guilty," then the government is surprised, shocked and sorry. These incidental excesses in execution, however, must not be employed to discredit the basic decision to use force. After all, no one could know. . . . And the results might have been worse (a proof of restraint). . . . And maybe we didn't use *enough* force. . . .

"There's only one way to get a better view of prison life," ran a slogan promoting the movie *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. Last spring I tried out the one better way I didn't go to jail to learn about prisons but to protest the war and a mere five days later I didn't leave jail as any kind of expert on prison reform. But as Bob Hoyt wrote in the *Naitonal Catholic Reporter* at the time, w went to prison with one issue and we could not help but come out with two. In our small smorgasbord of prison life we had a taste of living in the tiny cells of a ma imum-security cellblock. We had a chance to talk with prisoners or merely listen in on their conversations, ana to sense their state of helplessness, often as much in the face of our court system as of the bars and guar of the prison. Since then I have followed the situation in the city detention centers where not even a riot (where guards were taken hostage and held at knifepoint, as at Attica, but where Lindsay, unlike Rockefeller, came to the scene and supervised a settlement) and a steady trickle of suicides have moved the machinery of reform. Only last night I spoke at length with a young man who had spent almost half his life in prisons, having gone through escapes, riots, and the self-educating process of the "jailhouse lawyer." All these impressions converge on the phrase the Attica prisoners chanted and which occurs again and again in the writings of ex-convicts: "We want to be human beings; we will be treated as human beings."

It is the capacity to perceive prisoners as not quite human beings which makes the history of the Attica bloodbath so depressingly similar to the long string of massacres which punctuate the social struggles of our past. More than one guard was heard to say that these men are simply animals. That's what the newspapers once said about strikers here and in Europe before the troops or Pinkertons were brought in to do the bloody work. Only a short while before the murder of Fred Hampton in Chicago, the Chicago *Tribune* declared that the Panthers were "wild animals." And the element of national or racial differences has always made it that much easier to let the blood flow. We know the lesson from Vietnam only too well. But in Attica the word "nigger" was unapologetically on the lips of both guards and the assaulting state troopers. When black guards cannot even work at certain state prisons because they cannot obtain housing in the local community, it would be foolish to think that racial conflict was not a major factor in the prisons where so many prisoners are both criminals and non-white.

One should not be romantic about prisoners. The prisoners themselves certainly aren't. But in the end the prisoners at Attica did not execute a single one of their hostages—and that could not have happened simply because in every case the troopers and National Guardsmen got there first. Whether this mercy, on the part of desperate men, sprang from humanity or self-interest, we cannot know. On either count, the authorities, as so many authorities before them, mistook their men. In the long run, the assault at Attica may look as unnecessary as the assaults in hundreds of past social conflicts. In the long run, also, too many men will be dead.

PETER STEINFELS

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THE CONDITIONS OF FREEDOM REVISITED

Mystical revolution and the ironies of liberalism and conservatism

JAMES V. SCHALL

For a rather undisciplined collector of second-hand books, old essays, aging newspaper clippings and obscure magazine articles, like myself, almost forgotten files often yield surprising riches. On coming back to San Francisco recently in pursuit of nothing in particular, I came across two essays I had almost forgotten about—Christopher Dawson's "Christianity and Ideologies" [*Commonweal,* May 11, 1956] and Russell Kirk's "The Conditions of Freedom" [*Commonweal,* January 13, 1956]. Both of these essays I found immensely interesting to read again as I had just been reading E. I. Watkin's "Reflections on the Work of Christopher Dawson," [*The Downside Review*, January 1971] and Russell Kirk's "Chesterton, Madmen and Madhouses," [*The Modern Age,* Winter, 1971]. Fifteen years probably is not such a long time by historical standards, yet it seems to me now just long enough to open up unanticipated perspectives.

Reading Watkin's essay, it was refreshing to be reminded again of *The Judgment of the Nations*—almost the first serious book I ever read, one that still reminds me that the providence of God does indeed cast its shadows over earthly affairs—of *Progress and Religion* and *The Making of Europe*. "Every human culture has been and must be a religious culture." Man's relation to the divine mystery essentially defines how he organizes his social life. The underlying sense of something beyond man was, for Dawson, the life-giving, freeing spirit of any society. In many ways, the social and political turmoil of the past few years makes this seem to me more evident than ever before.

In Watkin's view, therefore, Dawson remains important for an age which has lost its sense of the past as the matrix and origin of its living meaning. The great institutions that have preserved our heritage, especially the universities and the church with its liturgy, are now bent upon reproducing secular intellectual fads and meaningless ritual novelties cut off from any cultural past or spiritual transcendence. "For the prevalent mood today," Watkin writes, "views human history as but an interesting museum of dead facts. . . . Our concern is with the future, the prospect of an earthly paradise of material satisfaction to be achieved without the need of divine aid by man's emanicipation and god-like control of natural forces. . . ."

Such an analysis which views our age from the point of view of science and technics has much merit, of course. European thinkers especially are much attracted to it. However, if the world is full of anything these days, it seems to me, it is more in the nature of religious and spiritual forces. Our problems seem more in the line of what ascetic authors used to call "discernment of spirits." Millenarianism remains, but it appears less and less materialistic.

Indeed, this suspicion that motives and movements today are more spiritual in nature has been so bothering me recently that just before leaving Rome in June, I reread among other things Watkin's essay on Platonic Christianity and mysticism in order to begin to rethink the whole problem ["Wisdom of the Spirit," *The Future of Catholic Christianity,* London, Constable, 1966]. For some time, in fact, Plato has seemed more and more significant to me, not that this should be particularly surprising since Plato is fundamental to all thought. Perhaps, though, it is not without interest that Bertolucci's film, *The Conformist,* uses Plato's image of the shadows in the cave in a political context. In any case, I feel that this

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secular, future-oriented discipline of modern culture is rapidly losing its validity. The movements for emancipation, political order and ecology are closer to religion and mysticism than to secular humanism and technology. Uncannily, perhaps, I almost begin to smell in the summer air of the Golden Gate the brooding presence of living idols and dark spirits.

The reminder of Dawson, nonetheless, unearthed "Christianity and Ideologies." At the time, Dawson worried about the spiritual content of the many ideologies spawned by Europe. For him, Europe was still the critical area of the world for out of its womb have come the intellectual, cultural and scientific movements that have united and disrupted the modern world. The traditions of humanism and Christianity were both older and broader than any of the modern ideologies. Indeed, only if these ideologies—socialism, liberalism, fascism, communism, democracy and nationalism—could retain their spiritual roots in Christianity and classical humanism would it be possible for them to avoid the nihilism to which they were tending apart from their past. If any of these ideologies were conceived in a limited, practical way, as "social reform" and "political action," they could easily be part of the older culture which transcended them. However, "the danger comes from their invasion of the world of religion and metaphysics, so that they claim man's allegiance even 'in the things that are not Caesar's.' "

Revolutionary Ideology

Contemporary theology has a similar difficulty. Revolutionary ideology, which has bluntly confronted us again with moral passion and worldly evil, has resurrected the gods, sometimes, of course, only to hate them, but still only living gods can be hated. There was a time under the influence of Bultmann and Bonhoeffer when the dominant theological mood was of "accommodation" to the modern world. The technical and scientific revolutions were positive goods and the only revolutions apparently on the scene. The attitude had removed the spirits and the demons, classified all the mysteries, and illuminated all the dark corners of mind and cosmos. Man had to live in a world of his own making, "without God," as the quaint saying went. Religion's task was not the witness to the transcendent but cooperation in the earthly task of man. If there was room for faith, it was in spite of the world which yielded only itself.

However, a strong reaction to this approach has arisen within the world itself. A diabolism responsible for man's dire condition has been discovered by the atheists and the naturalists. All evils are, perhaps, still somehow man-made. But our future is cast in explicitly apocalyptic terms mainly by professed non-believers. Against modern political and social evils, we begin to conjure up the very depths of our moral righteousness and anger. We strive relentlessly to identify and pursue the devils. Men and nations are hated as false gods. This form of civil manicheanism is violent and passionate. He who is not for it, is against it. Forgiveness and mercy are out of style. Vengeance and punishment are the norms.

Revolutionary theology, then, merges with revolutionary politics to work for a holy world in which there is no need for, or possibility of, passion or anger. In fact, it is almost as if, contrary to Dawson, religion has conquered ideology. There is again a kind of global sin and guilt—usually conceived in terms of the poor, the Third World, prejudice, suppression. There is a new mission and a missionary zeal. Again and again, we are warned, be where the revolution is appearing or perish. Perishing, however, like liberty seems often to be the more noble choice.

In one sense, surely, much of contemporary ferment appears to be—and often is—mental imbalance. S. I. Hayakawa—never anyone to pull his punches—frankly feels that we are engaged in hatreds and phobias that are simply deranged:

> "What we need right now is respite from paranoia. Paranoia is everywhere the prevailing emotional fashion. I am more than fed up with it.
>
> "Negroes, who have a long tradition of creating life styles for other Americans to emulate, must be given the credit for starting the fashion. . . . Abandoning Martin Luther King's way of appealing to the best in the white man's conscience and democratic ideals, the black militants adopted the approach of nursing one's grievances, brooding over them, getting angrier about them, until one's soul was filled with hate. For paranoia is not an emotion of brotherhood and love, such as Dr. King gave his life teaching. Paranoia says, 'Everybody hates me. Everybody persecutes me. And I hate everybody in return.' ["Paranoia and Social Action," *San Francisco Examiner,* July 3, 1971].

As a result of this attitude, Japanese, Mexican, even women's political groups have, in Hayakawa's view, all contracted this social disease which makes communication and progress virtually impossible. What is of moment here, it seems to me, is the recognition that hatred has spiritual roots, that even just complaints can go wild. In a way, then, this so-called paranoia is the visible sign that secularism—the world enclosed only on itself—is finally dead. For it means that strange gods are alive among us.

Before leaving Paris on May, 27, 1970, Dom Helder Camara gave a conference in a local Sports' Palace filled with notables of the French church, press and public. He spoke earnestly of the tortures in Brazil. Then he said to his Parisian audience:

> "But it is necessary to enlarge my scope: why does violence burst out among us and a little everywhere? My friends, it is a question of the violence

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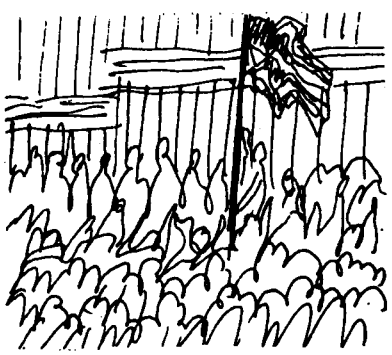
of the oppressed or the youth who force themselves to translate the revolt of the oppressed. Governments ought to have the courage to recognize that the beginning of all violence, violence Number One, the violent mother of all violence, these are the injustices existing everywhere in underdeveloped lands, but also in developed lands, and in relations between developed and underdeveloped countries. Always be careful today if someone speaks of violence to ask, of whose violence is it a question of, the oppressed or the oppressors? It is certain that the violence of the oppressor is less spectacular than that of the oppressed. However, in the measure where it creates or maintains a sub-human situation, a situation of misery, it causes death as in the most bloody wars. It creates physical, psychological and moral distortion." [*Les hommes, meurent, non les idées, Informations Catholiques Internationales,* June 15, 1970, p. 24]

For the Brazilian prelate, then, violence and hatred are almost necessary and to be expected, while for the Japanese-American university president, it is still paranoia no matter how understandable.

Without denying that there is too much paranoia and hatred about, still we can and undoubtedly should search



for an intellectual understanding of the kind of theological sensibility that Helder Camara certainly represents. Perhaps no recent writer has made a more persuasive and calm analysis of this approach than Professor Frederick Sontag ["The God of Revolution," *Pomona College Bulletin,* May, 1971]. We are too readily locked into our own social systems, Sontag argues. "Too much stability over too long a period seems to close us to any vivid perception of God." Therefore, we must recognize that God is freedom. His ways are his own. "The God to be understood in revolution is certainly a free God." This means that God is independent of any earthly determinisms or politics so that men in their search for meaning can always expect a further and higher development. God, as the Lord of History, simply cannot be satisfied with mankind's present condition. Thus, theological reflection must be based on a theory of God that can allow for radical and drastic worldly changes.

This kind of argument impresses me. Sontag is much too clear and ecumenical a thinker to set aside lightly. I do manage to retain, however, a kind of Chestertonian prejudice about the past. He said some place that true progress is usually made while looking backward, while the group of actual human beings toward whom we are most apt to be undemocratic or unfair are our own ancestors.

This brings me to Kirk's essay on the conditions of freedom. I am often struck today about the ironies of liberalism and conservatism as they face mystical revolutionary movements. The old rhetoric and theoretical framework of the French Revolution and the Nineteenth Century seem often lost today. Yet, the God of freedom is not the God of chaos. Change, as such, is merely change, chaos merely chaos. There is no law of history which suggests the impossibility of decline and insanity. Indeed, the God of revolution, in spite of the current mystique, must always include this latter possibility.

Kirk's essay returns immediately to the key issue of direction in any change, to the question of whether the things that are must necessarily be worse than the things that are about to be. Since Burke, the conservative has been acutely sensitive about the dangers of abstract freedom and mere change. This has been rather the forerunner of the terror. Moral order must be intrinsic to change. Prescriptive rights, rights with concrete liberties and experiences behind them, as my old professor Heinrich Rommen used to remind us, produce more secure and real freedom, than abstract ideologies have ever achieved.

Kirk was acutely conscious of the function of history in binding men to one another. "The danger in our era, rather, is that the foundations of the great deep will be broken up and that the pace of alteration will be so rapid that generation cannot link with generation." Some such thing is no doubt happening, though it is interesting to note that the current neo-conservatives, that is the ecologists, agree with the revolutionaries on the precise point of a lack of moral order based in ethical history. Kirk, consequently, returned to the two basic notions of humanism and Christianity, namely, that human nature can only be preserved if it is a gift of God beyond man's making and that some men, at least, must witness to something higher than the social order itself, no matter how corrupt or virtuous this order might be.

Consequently, there must be room for a freedom of the few that is pure and exalted enough to preserve the vision and order of God no matter what the social changes might be. Indeed, these transcendent values must be preserved even when the social changes themselves are providential which, of course, they can be. Without the free and contemplative few, the many risk losing their most precious gift.

"Very few people really are interested in true freedom, in any age; most folk always go for security, secular conformity, and enforced routine,

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at the price of independence. But the freedom of the few who really deserve freedom—and they are fewer in our time than ever they were before, I am inclined to believe—is infinitely precious; and in the long run, the security and contentment of the whole of humanity depend upon the survival of that freedom for a few."

And yet, as I reflect again on these wise words, I am fascinated by how similar they seem to the God of revolution who ceaselessly searches out the vanguard, the few prophetic souls who bear witness to the existence of evil and corruption in the world. It is instructive, too, to realize that the radical and Marxist concept of the "vanguard" itself originates in conservative theory.

Kirk is undoubtedly correct, the God of freedom is the God of order. "Order, in the moral realm, is the realization of a body of transcendent values—indeed a hierarchy of values—which give purpose to existence and motive to conduct. Order, in society, is the harmonious arrangement of classes and functions which guarantee justice and give willing consent to law and ensures that we shall be safe together." The God of revolution is also the God of "we hold these truths." Not even the God of revolution can make all abnormalities and derangements moral and good.

Classic Pessimism

Without some attention to transcendent order—and here I believe both classical liberalism and conservatism were also theoretically defective—the revolutionary thesis gives rise to two difficulties. In Helder Camara's terms, I do not believe it is either true or necessary to attribute all exaggeration and corruption of violence to governmental injustice. This is a remnant of a classic pessimist view of the nature of the state. We are, furthermore, finite and much of our difficulty comes from the very limitedness of our minds and talents and virtues. Attributing to injustice what mainly belongs to our finiteness is one of the most explosive and erroneous dangers we are faced with. In so doing, we are perilously close to denying our being.

Secondly, however, I can agree with Hayakawa's implication that the proper human and Christian response to violence even when it is caused by clear injustice is not hatred and counter-violence. A violence not based in hatred is both necessary and possible, it seems to me, in any real theory of legitimate government. Too, I can understand and even justify violence at times—a just war and a just revolution seem quite possible to me today as they apparently do to most professed revolutionaries—but I do think that there is a higher response that is made of suffering and tolerance. It is the abiding vocation of some few always to let us know this.

"All ages are always ages of transition," Anthony Levi has recently written ["The Spirit of the Age," *The Way,* London, April, 1971]. Levi warns against too much doom prophecy. We have in fact reduced violence in the world to a very great degree. Governments have pacified great areas that were formerly the scene of conflict. "What distinguishes the cultures of the world is the tension generated by the speed with which they are moving toward the liberal values of the most culturally advanced western societies." For Levi, the essential function of the church is to concern itself with the truly spiritual values of prayer and contemplation given by Jesus. Outside the church, all sorts of prophetic and demonic witnesses are arising.

> "Survival depends on upholding the properly spiritual values which are wholly and uniquely in the church's province, and neither on placating concessions to relevance, nor on political militancy, nor on reactionary moral attitudes. Properly, spiritual values may need impartially to be upheld against the forces of law and of dissent. Left-wing Christianity sells the pass as surely as do the Christian supporters of facist regimes.
>
> The message of our age, in so far as it concerns the church is that the church's spiritual function either has to be squarely assumed or the church will perish. . . . The church alone can provide the spiritual insight to reconcile the forces of protest with those of law."

While I am not particularly impressed with Levi's attempt to establish providential conditions for the continued existence of Christianity—a minimum of history makes us suspect that the failures and sins of believers do not absolutely necessitate the departure of the Spirit. Still the witness to transcendence and the consciousness of both change and law—*the God of revolution is the God of history*—are indeed the tasks of Christianity.

The conditions of freedom, then, must govern any theory of change and revolution. Kirk was not wrong to cite Dostoevski's *The Devils,* "to begin with unlimited freedom is to end with unlimited despotism." But there is a further point that must be made. Paul said that our struggles were not against flesh and blood alone. I frankly do not see how we can explain the hatreds and agonies of the modern world on any purely atheist, secularist, or psychological assumption. Certainly, at least in my opinion, it has not been done so far. Recent revolutionary movements are, to my mind, mainly religious. This does not make them necessarily holy. But they are still spiritual. And we Christians surely believe that the most corrupting as well as the most blessed things ultimately are not material but spiritual.

Kirk makes a comment in his recent essay in *The Modern Age* of a nature that we do not see too often, one indeed we do not like to think about—at least I do not.

"Yet behind the arrogance of twentieth century

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intellectuality, Chesterton believed, there works a corrupting power that is not human merely. That same power employs the consuming selfishness of the monopolist, the strutting *libido dominandi* of the unprincipled politician, the gnawing envy of the ideologue. Detesting sanity, this power whispers to me that they may be gods—and chains them within the walls of the madhouse."

In the light of our optimism and progress, furthermore, it is perhaps indicative that Battista Mondin has pointed out that we not only need a rehabilitation of a theology of hope today but even more a theology of perdition. In other words, not all change is progress, nor is all past necessarily worse than what we shall have, nor are all our hatreds, evils, envies and jealousies merely rational.

The cover of the *Pomona College Bulletin* in which Professor Sontag's essay appeared carries a graphic print of Albrecht Dürer's "Saint Michael Fighting the Dragon" from his *Apocalypse*. We see below the hauntingly beautiful and peaceful German countryside, the mountains, the trees, the flowers, the churches, the lake, the ships at anchor. Above this lovely scene is the horrendous battle of Michael and Satan, the Dragon, locked in mortal combat. Theologians, of course, assure us that this is only myth.

What I wish to say, in conclusion, is merely this. Intellectual freedom demands that we remain open enough to include all the possibilities and all the evidence. There is, to my mind, a new element on the scene today—perhaps not so new, only more noticed—that we have not observed so clearly in recent centuries. This is a political and social hatred or paranoia, if you will, which somehow seems to surpass the limits of the human. Furthermore, this hatred of men, groups and classes is seen in revolutionary, moral, worldly terms. No doubt, of course, it witnesses to much that is wrong. But in all cases, its ethos, its energy is spiritual. We still have to discern.

The final condition of freedom remains contemplative; that is, beyond hatred, progress and change, the God of revolution is already Lord. Without this there is no order—Dawson was right. We are imperfect, finite and sinful. The last and highest revolution is that such creatures are offered beatitude, but not for anything that they can merit. The God of freedom, then, ultimately governs both revolutionary utopia and the lovely German countryside.

THE POLITICS OF GULLIBILITY

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It takes two parties to maintain a consistent pattern of deception

THOMAS M. CONRAD

The controversy over the *New York Times'* publication of information from the top-secret Department of Defense history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam is simply the latest, and one of the more spectacular, occasions for debate on government secrecy and deception of the public. It is time to break out of the usual pattern of public debate, the pattern which is uselessly repeated on each occasion of scandal. *Of course* the government lies to us; *of course* such lying is immoral and contrary to democratic principles. Ritual pieties about the public right to knowledge in a democracy and professions of shock do not address the practical issue of citizenry control of government. What I will be urging in the following remarks is that we give up all hope of honesty from government—that is to say, spontaneous honesty even when it is costly to those in power, voluntary submission to public debate and scrutiny of policy in advance of its becoming a fait accompli—and proceed on to the serious and necessarily ugly business of forcing official policy to serve public interests. To do this, we must put to one side the issue of government behavior and concentrate upon the patterns of behavior of the information media and the public itself which contribute to ignorance and deception; it takes at least two parties to maintain a consistent, persisting pattern of deception—the liar and the more-or-less willing dupe. The federal government, for the past several Administrations, and particularly in the field of foreign policy, has been no more cunning in its attempts to deceive the American public than it has been in the conduct of actual policy; indeed, the frightening level of stupidity displayed in the formulation and execution of foreign policy has been one of the strongest pressures for official attempts at deception. Only a very active willingness to be duped on the part of many Americans, together with a spotty performance on the part of the media, has maintained the level of public confidence in government as high as it was until the latter half of the '60s—when it suddenly, and to some extent irreversibly, collapsed.

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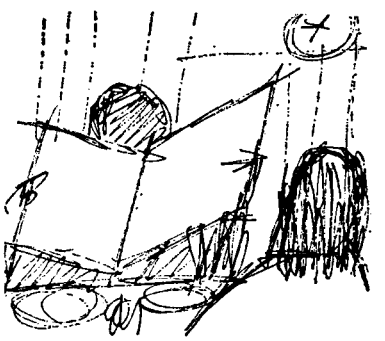
Consider, first, the case of the Vietnam war, which has been largely responsible for the general collapse of faith in the veracity and morality of government. Vietnam is a most unusual case, in that almost all of the deception and ignorance about it in earlier stages can be laid to public self-deception. Official attempts at deception were crude, easy in principle to penetrate, and were in fact quite adequately penetrated by the media. It was not for lack of raw data that the nature of the war was misunderstood in the earlier stages. But even as an increasing proportion of the U.S. population began to understand and resist the war, they learned that exposure and resistance were powerless to deflect official policy. This is a lesson which must never be forgotten, and is one reason for the practical irrelevance of the usual ritual arguments about the public's right to knowledge in a democracy.

Without functioning means for citizenry control of government actions, public knowledge merely leads to furious mass feelings of impotence which are likely to ruin the chances for functional reactions a lot faster than they damage official power. Public knowledge is a *tool* for regaining public control of government; it is not a substitute for power. The usual pattern of public debate on government secrecy and deception deflects, as it is intended to do, attention which should be aimed at the realities of public powerlessness in the face of government into a more passive issue of public information. The image of the public which underlies the usual debate on secrecy and official lying is that of a passive mass of spectators, consumers of the media, whose rights *as spectators* are being violated: it is unfashionably radical to dwell upon the really important scandal of dictatorial government actions and attitudes.

Before one criticizes the media too strongly for their failures, one must recognize that to a large extent the pressures on the media are the pressures faced by any other business which cannot control consumer demand. In the 1950s, due largely to the aftermath of McCarthyism and cold war pieties, media exposure of government misbehavior in foreign policy was spotty, difficult and dangerous, and largely a thankless duty because the media-consuming public were not "ready for it"; it was the steadily increasing public animosity over their manipulation and abuse by government in the '60s which made it feasible for the media to open up in the fashion which had theoretically been their duty all along. To his credit, the usual "working stiff" reporter is highly skeptical of official cant, and is disposed to go as far as the media management and the consuming public will let him go in exposing it. It is very frustrating to fight for the "right" to report on government misbehavior, only to find the public deliberately ignoring the result because it is upsetting and unfashionable. That, however, is a much more frequent case than public complaints that the media are telling them too little: and when those complaints are heard, at least in the '60s, one can usually find that the facts of the case are that what was reported went unheeded—through deliberate public self-deception and deafness—until some spectacular explosion of sudden interest took place.

One particularly annoying example of this public amnesia about past media coverage is the case of the My Lai atrocities. The initial public reaction was that My Lai was a terrible anomaly; it was only in the sequel when returned veterans and others made a consistent case for a pattern of atrocities that the facts which had been reported pretty thoroughly in the past seemed to fall into a patterned history. But what had liberal opponents of the war imagined their own statements about the moral monstrosity of the war meant, prior to the exposure of the My Lai case? In a peculiar sense, atrocity



was seen as an abstraction; it would have in some strange way detracted from the high moral tone of the earlier resistance to the war to think in terms of specifics. Indeed, some may remember that not very many years ago a number of war critics dissented from the "provocative tactics" of a minority who were publicizing such specifics as napalmed children and the effects of antipersonnel bombs. The relative alacrity with which the government decided, after unsuccessful attempts to conceal atrocity cases in the past, to make a show trial out of My Lai, tempts one to suspect that it was only after the war began to collapse and the civilians in the Executive and Congress had to seek cover from their primary responsibility for the war that a pattern of atrocities could be officially admitted, as part of the general current effort to shift blame onto the military—particularly onto the drafted non-professional military.

The worst real failures of the media—as opposed to failures of the public to perceive and use what the media provide—are, quite naturally, in those cases where a great deal of technical background information and consistent, ongoing coverage are needed in order to understand the import of an issue. In the case of foreign policy, the worst coverage involves complex strategic and military-technical issues where official secrecy is less of a real problem than lack of public technical understanding. Such lack of technical understanding is more excusable than deliberate public self-deception on political and social matters, and both the media and the public face

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special problems in this area, but a great deal better could be done if there were more effort to dramatize the relevance of technical matters to such issues as arms control and disarmament. There is a natural, intellectually-lazy attitude among many observers to the effect that those factors which would require some effort to understand are probably irrelevant; for such observers, official secrecy and the shortcomings of media coverage are a convenient excuse for continued ignorance.

My perspective on government secrecy and its penetration by public scrutiny is that of one trained in international politics and specializing in the analysis (or intelligence reduction) of public but not publicized information, both political and military-technical; personal experience suggests how little success official secrecy usually enjoys, and how seldom the facts which *are* successfully concealed or distorted later turn out to be crucial to policy. Those who have never made a careful, persistent effort to discover what they could discover by analysis of public sources, even in the ordinary, unspecialized media alone, are not really aware of the incredible "leakiness" of government. The usual problem for those who are doing such analysis is not that information goes unreported, but rather that there is too much information, the import of which is not aways clear except in combination, and that precisely because the data base goes beyond consciously-"groomed" official lines for public consumption, it does not have an oversimplified coherence, and must be drawn into an overall pattern by the work of the analyst.

The usual dynamics of the process of penetrating secrecy is that those who are making continuing, serious efforts to do so succeeded fairly early, while it may take years for the realities to penetrate the consciousness of large numbers of "ordinary" citizens and to become highly visible in the general-purpose media. The practical impact of these lags is that, while some observers make themselves aware of concealed plans and actions quite early in the development of official policy, frequently early enough that public pressure might have some chance of deflecting the outcomes, sufficient numbers of people outside the government become aware of the facts only so much later that a policy "box" and fait accompli have already been constructed. A major reason for the lag is public resistance to understanding, which is embodied in a need to repeat the facts a number of times until the consiousness is reached by "bullying" force of repetition (in competition with the more centrally-organized and powerful deception-by-repetition of official lines); and a major reason, in turn, for the resistance to understanding is that such understanding would be a source of anxiety.

The fitful way that political issues and social problems have been raised and dropped in the '60s is a symptom of a general psycho-dynamics which is also the reason for the peculiarities of public response to government information. We are, simply, in a nightmare of interconnected problems which will not go away, and which—particularly because of their interaction—are hard even to understand. The basic driving force behind much of the public response is not the practical substance of these problems, but rather the subjective, inner problem of frustration and impotence. We have been individually and collectively rubbed raw by a history of repeated proofs of our impotence in the face of collective problems, and for many individuals at this point, political and social action has become a repeatedly abortive attempt at personal psychotherapy rather than a rational-instrumental attempt to solve objective, external problems. Of those disposed to turn politics into therapy, some (particularly in the younger counter-culture) have gone clearly and self-consciously into a rejection of collective rationality, but many remain, particularly among liberal intellectuals, in a limbo between privatism and traditional political activism. The result is a neurotic cycle, repeated continually and obsessively, in which political issues and social problems are raised and become fashionable for awhile until the activists reach a sufficiently disturbing level of frustration, after which they are dropped—not because the external problems are solved, or on their way to solution, but because the internal problem of a feeling of impotence has again been raised.

Politics of Neurosis

The role of public knowledge and debate, including that involving government secrecy and deception, in the general problem of the politics of neurosis is rather clear at this point. For most liberals, perception of the government as a dictatorship is most upsetting and ideologically unacceptable. Perception of the government as an incorrigibly deceptive enemy of public values being such a source of discomfort for liberals, the result is a deliberate pattern of gullibility in which repeated scandals over government secrecy, deception, and manipulation of the public, instead of representing a cumulative weight of evidence, become a succession of shocking anomalies.

Since the factual lesson to be learned from these exposures is emotionally and ideologically unacceptable, the lesson is not in fact learned: functional stupidity takes the place of the increasing individual and group sophistication which would be needed to cope with citizenly control of government. Factual understanding of government actions and official attitudes becomes stigmatized as "radical paranoia"; those in the media, and expert government-watcher specialists who take their responsibilities seriously, are punished for their zeal, at the very least by being ignored as an effort of will; the irresponsibility of government continues and grows, further entrenching official policy against public modification; and the grip of the politics of neurosis upon the national consciousness grows apace.

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THE SCREEN

The bare bones of Urbain Grandier's story (and of Urbain Grandier) were all that remained after his execution in 1634. As a parish priest in Loudun, he had snubbed the future Cardinal Richelieu. Next he seduced the daughter of Loudun's prosecutor, and abandoned her when she became pregnant. Finally, he refused the post of confessor to Loudun's Ursuline convent, thereby offending a prioress already afflicted with *furor uterinus* on his account. The prioress accused Grandier of possessing her with devils; and prompted by the prosecutor, Richelieu's agent and a rack of exorcists, she made the the charge stick. Grandier was condemned to be asked questions both ordinary and extraordinary, after which he was burnt at the stake.

In *The Devils of Loudun,* published 316 years after the fact, Aldous Huxley found Grandier's case more difficult than the ecclesiastical judges had. Huxley concluded that Grandier's sensuality and pain became a cross on which he learned the true love of God. "It is only through the *datum* of nature," Huxley quipped, "that we can hope to reach the *donum* of Grace." This is neat and more orthodox than it sounds: it places Grandier where he belongs, in the middle of the Great Chain of Being. Unfortunately, however, Grandier's own spirituality is not reachieved by *The Devils,* a new Ken Russell film based on Huxley's book and starring Oliver Reed and Vanessa Redgrave. Russell's film never gets beyond the *datum* of nature.

Russell does get Grandier's story straighter than Jon Whiting did ten years ago in a play also based on Huxley's book. But Russell has to turn Grandier's martyrdom into something political in order to dramatize it. It's true that Grandier tried to prevent Richelieu from leveling Loudun's medieval walls, which were still, in the 1600s, Loudun's only defense against national oligarchists. But while this episode was only peripheral in Grandier's life, it is central in the film. Grandier is thus distorted into a peculiarly modern hero—a man whose relations with the church seem to parallel those between Arthur London and the Party in *The Confession.* On his set Russell had the town walls *and* the ecclesiastical buildings done in the same modern design, as if the visual association might persuade us that both have some easy relevance to our times.

For Russell himself Grandier's religious experience is significant only physiologically. The film would almost literally drown out with shrieks of pain the pieties and holy ejaculations Grandier numbles under torture. While he is content to appeal only to our morbid curiosity about suffering, however, Russell doesn't bother to satisfy that curiosity. We find out how often and loudly Grandier screamed, but not how the contraption worked that made him scream. Nor is the difference between ordinary and extraordinary questions (a matter of the amount of torture) ever clear. Russell can't have it both ways: he can't hope to get our attention by being lurid, and then pretend that the details of the hysteria and torture are not worth knowing. He is simply neglecting problems of exposition that he himself raised. Either his obscurantist style is a cop-out, or else he is so absorbed in Grandier's pain that, like Grandier, he too loses coherence.

The film's most radical departure from both Huxley and history is to superimpose a plague on Loudun. The plague rages through the town and spreads its gore through the film up until the very moment Grandier's persecution begins. Then this plague disappears without a trace because Russell doesn't need it any more. It has served its purpose, which was to entertain us until the exorcism and torture could begin. Russell is ultimately willing to sacrifice all other considerations—history, character development, narrative art or whatever—in order to sustain a vision of corruption in man and nature. His film therefore becomes pornography, for only in pornography does such monomania dominate. It may be pornography for aesthetes, but it is pornography nonetheless. What distinguishes Russell is that, unlike most pornographers, he's not bored with his work. He enjoys it enormously.

The paranoia that swept Loudun's Ursulines was probably not uncommon, considering the jealousy and bitterness with which girls entered such convents. A girl from a family with limited means could become a bride of the Lord for a dowry much skimpier than any qualified mortal man would accept. So families often forced their daughters into the holy concubinage of the convent. This was the situation in Grandier's time, as it was 125 years later in Diderot's. To expose this scandal Diderot published a novel, *The Nun,* which is about a hapless girl who must enter the convent without a vocation. At first the girl, Suzanne, balks at her vows, and later, having been coerced into them, she sues to regain her freedom. But the suit wins her only an unwelcome transfer. Having been ostracized at her first convent, she is subjected to continuous lesbianism at the second.

Diderot's novel is a first-person narrative, a "letter" Suzanne writes to a patron. Despite the daring of her suit, this letter shows her to be, as a literary character anyway, a very conventional eighteenth-century girl. When her new Mother Superior takes sexual liberties with her, for instance, she sees no harm in it and repeatedly mistakes the woman's orgasms for illness. Only in the eighteenth-century novel could so naive a girl have lived. Nor is Suzanne's slowness the novel's only imperfection. While Diderot hoped his book's publication would be a spur

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to reform, he originally wrote Suzanne's "letter" as neither a novel nor a public service. The letter was in the beginning a forgery that Diderot sent to a friend as a practical joke. That Diderot did not at first take Suzanne's problems very seriously shows through in the novel too. Like Ken Russell, Diderot sometimes enjoys the lasciviousness of the story too much.

When Jacques Rivette made *The Nun* into a film, with Anna Karina as Suzanne, the scandal was almost as great as that the novel had created. On its release in 1965 the film was suppressed by the Gaullist government. Yet the film tones down the most offensive parts of the novel and is, for aesthetic reasons rather than social or moral ones, wise to do so. If Suzanne's naiveté seemed incredible when expressed in her own words, it would have been ludicrous objectified on film. Rivette endows her with an instinctive revulsion for the advances of her Mother Superior, which is a considerable improvement on the character Diderot gave her.

Otherwise, however, Rivette follows Diderot slavishly. In Diderot's last few pages Suzanne escapes the convent and has more adventures than she has had throughout the rest of the novel. Diderot justified this choppy ending with an editorial footnote to Suzanne's letter. Rivette uses this ending too, even though a film can't make comparable editorial excuses. Rivette does tamper with the novel enough to provide a *dénouement,* but without its footnote Diderot's ending seems pointlessly clumsy.

At times such clumsiness, which also occurs elsewhere in the film, is reminiscent of Godard's cinematic style and seems to be what Rivette is striving for. Although Godard's style is hardly appropriate to the realistic period film Rivette has made, it isn't surprising to find that style cropping up in Rivette's work. Rivette is yet another *Cahiers* critic now making films, and Godard both appeared in and boosted his first feature. More important, though, Rivette seems unable to achieve his own style. His imitation of Godard simply fills the void. The length of his films—this one is 130 minutes and the previous one was four and a half hours—suggests that he is groping for style in a tortured way. He's only made three films in a decade so far as I know, but perhaps if he becomes more prolific a style of his own will emerge.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

THE MEDIA IS THE MASS

Leonard Bernstein opens the Kennedy Center

RALPH THIBODEAU

Whatever posterity may have to say about Leonard Bernstein's new *Mass,* premiered at the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, one thing is dead certain: it is relevant here and now. It is the ultimate "People's Mass," a contemporary, unstructured celebration of life and love and peace which is the type of religious experience clamored for by the ever younger people of the earth.

The work is improperly labeled merely *Mass,* even though all the texts of the Latin Ordinary are incorporated in it. But with equal time given to parts of the English Mass and other texts by Bernstein and Stephen Schwartz, it is rather a show *about* the Mass, about the meaning or lack of meaning of the Mass, a modern sacred Broadway opera. On the program it is subtitled: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers. And it uses every style of music and the dance stagecraft to make its point about the contemporary fragmentation of religious belief, while reflecting the deep feeling for religion of the young people of our time, and of some of their elders.

Wagner's word, *Gesamtkunstwerk,* or total work of art, inevitably comes to mind to try to embrace the many-faceted work. The *Mass* required some 200 musicians, actors and dancers, including a large pit orchestra and mixed chorus, the Berkshire Boys Choir, the Alvin Ailey Dancers, and street people, a brass band and a rock band on stage, besides much pretaped quadraphonic sound and music issuing from speakers throughout the house. The music ranged from sublime *a cappella* choruses to jazzy pentecostal to medium-hard rock in a phantasmagoria of sound. In the very size of the forces involved and in the frequent *Weltschmerz* of the sentimental musical settings, particularly of the English texts, there was more than a shadow of Mahler over the whole proceeding. It would not be entirely inaccurate to say, as Moszkowski's colleagues said of him, that Bernstein often suffers from a case of Mahleria.

The story line is carried along mostly by the dramatic and musical star of the show, tenor Alan Titus as the "celebrant," who brought to the part an outstanding voice and stage presence.

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From a blue-jean-clad folk guitarist at the beginning, he gradually evolves into the celebrant of a Mass by the laying on of vestments, the appearance of an altar table with furnishings and vessels, and his leadership of various elements of the "congregation," the robed and pewed, and the street people, in a complete enactment of the Latin Mass Ordinary, plus the *Asperges, Vidi Aquam* and *Confiteor* of another day, and the penitential Psalm, *De Profundis,* included. Interspersed throughout these texts are English commentaries in the form of songs, statements and exclamations by the central character and others. All the while, the dancers provide constant physical interpretation, and there is much controlled movement by the rock band, the brass band, the street people, and the boys' choir functioning both as a part of the musical fabric and as altar boys.

With all this and tape, too, the whole is a mind-boggling experience. But for most of the way there is nothing that could strike one as particularly disedifying, even though traditionally unliturgical, like an occasional girl in hot pants, or an occasional extraneous line like, "The Lord looked at His creation and saw that it was Goddam good."

There is enough symbolism in the work to engender heated argument for years to come. The chorus, for example, after the words, *Dona nobis pacem,* of the *Agnus Dei,* fairly screams at the celebrant, *Pacem, Pacem,* with the implication that peace is the one thing which neither he nor the Mass can offer. In another episode a soloist sings, "He gave us the cross, and we made it into a sword." The anti-war sentiment is obvious, as is the contemporary relevance of the Epistle-Gospel sermon, "Brothers, this is the Gospel I preach, and in its service I have suffered many hardships, yea, even unto imprisonment." Also implicit is an antipathy to organized, established religion, as in another commentary a young man sings, "How can anybody say *Credo*?" The show will probably never make St. Peter's.

But when the composer adds to the Latin *Sanctus* a statement of the Hebrew *Kadosh Adonai,* meaning the same thing, it is evident that he is affirming, in a great new testament, the continuity and validity of the Judeo-Christian philosophy which has informed our whole Western civilization.

The theological going gets really rough only toward the very end of the Mass, at the time of Consecration and Communion, when the celebrant finally gives in to all the doubts expressed by the congregation and to his own doubts, throws off his vestments, smashes the sacred vessels to the floor, strips the altar, and does a short, anguished dance thereon. Then he dejectedly steps down from the stage into the darkness beneath the orchestra pit. The symbolism of despair at the death of the now obvious Christ figure is a shocking thing, something which we have been conditioned to temper with a sense of the imminence of the Resurrection. But we have to remember here that all men sometimes have serious doubts, and that we also traditionally denude our altars on Good Friday and endure a species of despair with the dead Christ. Bernstein has done his homework well. And in the end, the celebrant emerges again as the blue-jeaned youth to join in the Kiss of Peace symbolic of the revival of his personal faith, while the altar boys carry the embrace of peace to the audience in imitation of one of the happier elements of our present liturgical renewal.

As for the rest of the heavy-laden symbolism, it would be both fruitless and unfair to future audiences to attempt a complete exegesis *ad litteram, ad sensum, ad allegoriam, ad moralitatem,* and no doubt *ad nauseam.* It is of much greater import to state the conviction that Bernstein has created here a valid work of art which is at the same time a popular triumph. Its relevance can be diminished only by the elimination of the serious questions to which it speaks: war, poverty, racism and bigotry of all sorts, and the incredible crassness and indifference to these real human problems by hierarchs of church and state alike.

If Bernstein makes use of too many merely faddish elements to get his point across, so be it: even Christ spoke in parables which fishermen could understand. And if there is critical animosity to a musical with a message, again so be it: Verdi spoke hugely but subtly for Italian nationalism a hundred years ago, but we still hear the music in his operas. The crux of the problem of the *Mass,* in fact, lies in this very question: can the musical values of the work sustain it after its social and political relevance has passed? A non-answer: not even Verdi could have predicted the answer to such a question about *Aida.* But as a complete entity, the *Mass* will live while we live. It is a fitting tribute to the memory of a man who thought deeply about the quality of life.

The production was mounted by Roger Stevens, director of the Kennedy Center, with settings by Oliver Smith, choreography by Alvin Ailey, costumes by Frank Thompson, and particularly effective lighting by Gilbert Helmsley, Jr. And as the home critic of record, I reserve my last critical plaudits for conductor Maurice Peress, regular conductor of the Corpus Christi and Austin symphonies. The *Mass* is his own personal triumph as well as Bernstein's. In spite of the glare of publicity on hundreds of celebrities at the opening, it was Peress, working in the pit, who gave definitive form to a most impressive piece of musical theater, which we can reasonably expect to be with us for many years to come. If it is, it will be in no small measure because of the efforts and talent of Peress, who has now established himself among the foremost conductors of musical drama, serious or popular.

There remains the final question of Bernstein's rumored interest in the Roman Church. Where would a disaffected liberal Jew go for the ultimate religious consolation? Surely not into the arms of the Whore of Babylon? But stranger things have happened. Without intending anything flippant or offensive, or even especially prophetic, I would venture that Bernstein, in the words which Gene Fowler's old Methodist granny spoke of Gene, "is beginning to smell of incense."

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BOOKS

Ford Madox Ford, Abbie Hoffman and Christian beginnings

Your Mirror To My Times: The Selected Autobiographies and Impressions of Ford Madox Ford

EDIT. MICHAEL KILLIGREW

Holt, Rinehart, $10

The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford

ARTHUR MIZENER

World, $20

JOSEPH WIESENFARTH

Anyone who takes it upon himself to read both these books will find Mr. Mizener's distinctly inferior because Mr. Killigrew's was written by Ford Madox Ford.

Ford Madox Ford was born Ford Hermann Hueffer and later affectionately rechristened Ford Mad-Ox Hoofer by Ezra Pound. After World War I, when his wife Elsie objected to his lovers' calling themselves Mrs. Hueffer, he changed his name to Ford Madox Ford.

Ford, a man "mad about writing," was born the grandson of the anti-Academic painter Ford Madox Brown, "who exactly resembled the king of hearts in a pack of cards." Ford's father was the music critic of *The Times* and promoted Wagner's music in England. Ford's favorite uncle was William Rossetti, Dante Gabriel's sane and kindly brother. Ford's friends as a young man were Conrad and James, W. H. Hudson and Stephen Crane. Of them he wrote: "Taken altogether, they were, those four, all gods for me. They formed, when I was a boy, my sure hope in eternity of good letters."

Born in 1873, Ford wrote eighty-one books before he died in 1939. He was a true believer in his own maxim: "The only human activity that has always been of extreme importance to the world is imaginative literature." Ford collaborated on three novels with Conrad; founded the *English Review*, where he first published D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis, and the *transatlantic review*, where he published parts of *Finnegans Wake* as *Work in Progress*. Throughout his life Ford helped every writer he considered serious, taking literally his grandfather's advice: "Beggar yourself rather than refuse assistance to anyone whose genius you think shows promise of being greater than your own."

"You must live merrily and trust to good letters," Ford said. He was only half able to achieve his ideal. He lived any way but merrily, being as fatally attracted to women as they were to him. He eloped when not quite twenty-one, had a notorious affair with Violet Hunt, and rounded out a life of variety more peacefully, first with Stella Bowen and then with Janice Biala. Like so many writers, Ford fought endlessly with publishers and was constantly in want. His attitude toward the publishing world is summarized in his epitaph for his agent Pinker, who died on a business trip to the United States: "I remember thinking that New York was no place to go if it could kill anyone so hard as Pinker."

Michael Killigrew's random compilation of extracts from Ford's reminiscences proceeds on the premise that factually right or factually wrong the truth of Ford's story is in his own telling of it. We meet in these pages the great men of late-Victorian England, novelist and poet and painter. Ford's relations with Conrad, James Wells, and Galsworthy are all rehearsed. His editorship of the two reviews is given from his standpoint. His love of the Kentish countryside and Provencal France is richly recalled. Memories of the war are given with quiet sadness: "In the end, if one is a writer one is a writer and if one was in that hell it was a major motive that one should be able to write of it, if only for the benefit—to the extent of the light vouchsafed one!—of one's fellow men." And everywhere runs the cadence, metaphor and timing of Ford's prose: "I should say myself that the art of writing in English received the numbing blow of a sandbag when Rossetti wrote at the age of eighteen *The Blessed Damozel.*"

Arthur Mizener's biography treats too little of the Ford who, in Pound's words, "never dented an idea for a phrase's sake." It emphasizes too much a neurasthenic Ford, who had "a romantic need, far more developed—or at least far more indulged—than in most men, to see himself as admirable and his defeats as undeserved, to re-

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vise in his imagination his actual conduct in such a way as to make himself the virtuous victim of a malicious world." The details of Ford's quarrels with women, publishers, and creditors are unending. Ford's imagination—which gave the world the greatest of novels and was the greatest of his gifts—seems struggling to free itself from an endless strait jacket of fact tied to fact. Though a mine to the curious, such a compilation of detail concerning Ford's practical incompetence makes one forget the gifted novelist and generous benefactor of dedicated writers. After reading through Mr. Killigrew's casual gathering of Ford's reminiscences one wonders when that happy imagination is going to appear in Mr. Mizener's *Saddest Story*.

By the structure of his biography Mr. Mizener suggests that one best read Ford's novels by knowing Ford's life. The reader is shown the Pre-Raphaelite world Ford hated, the modern world Ford had to live in, the eighteenth-century world he wanted to live in. Literature justifies the existence of this last world. Love is his reward for writing and encouraging others to write. But literature, in reality, is in the hands of the Pinkers and the publishers. And love exposes ladies to forgetting you are a gentleman. Impressionism saves Ford, however, because it makes *his* personal truth in literature *the* truth in life. *The Good Soldier* shows the two sides of Ford in Ashburnham and Dowell as they move through the fictional version of events in Ford's life. Ford momentarily sees round himself to create the masterpiece of his constant theme—the good man as victim.

The same method with added details shows Ford after the war in "his new view of himself as a soldier-writer" and is used to analyze Christopher Tietjens in *Parade's End*. Mr. Mizener's readings are valuable contributions to Ford scholarship and will remain a permanent port of the canon of criticism.

But just as one feels that this biography of Ford is not the definitive biography (Janice Biala told the biographer it did Ford an injustice) one knows that these readings of his novels are not the best readings. The assembled facts of a man's life are neither the essence of that life nor the shaping spirit of his imagination. There is something finally too reductive in a quantum theory of biography and literary interpretation, especially when the dynamics of a divided psyche inform the audit of his life. The understanding of the human condition and the fathomless sympathy he had for it are parts of Ford that the many facts and the interesting theory of *The Saddest Story* miss. "You must not mind Hueffer," wrote Stephen Crane to a friend; "that is his way. He patronizes me; he patronizes Mr. Conrad; he patronizes Mr. James. When he goes to Heaven he will patronize God Almighty. But God Almighty will get used to it, for Heuffer is all right!" In this biography one has too often the impression that Mr. Mizener forgets that Ford, after all his patronizing, is, after all, all right.

Steal This Book

ABBIE HOFFMAN

Grove Press, $1.95

Living on the Earth

ALICIA BAY LAUREL

Vintage Books, $3.95

JAMES FOREST

Abbie Hoffman has written a manual that "calls on the Robin Hoods of Santa Barbara Forest to steal from the robber barons who own the castles of capitalism."

It is by no means a book without values—simply another book whose author assumes values have their border lines, borders that for Abbie have more to do with lifestyle and hair length than lines on maps: "To steal from a brother or sister is evil. *Not* to steal from the institutions that are pillars of Pig Empire is equally immoral."

> When we conclude that the bank robbers rather than the bankers should be the trustees of the universities, then we begin to think clearly.

And so he proceeeds with his lifestyle recipes for the citizens of Woodstock Nation—how to obtain (for little or nothing) food, shelter, clothing, transportation, medical care, pets, posters, maps, clerical status, vacations, booze, diplomas, toilet access and burials. All that in a section headed, SURVIVE!

"But," he writes, "we cannot survive without learning to fight, and that is the lesson of the second section, FIGHT!" Here we learn how to operate an underground press, establish guerrilla broadcasting stations, vest and arm for street demonstrations; there is also news of the fine art of "trashing," the making of bombs, first aid for street fighters, hip-pocket law, the methodology of advanced shoplifting, the getting and using of weapons, and how to hide out in the underground.

A final section—LIBERATE!—records some specifics of dollarless survival in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

A fair chunk of Abbie's book would be morally inoffensive to the authors of the Baltimore Catechism. For those sufficiently enterprising, brassy and/or clever, there is an amazing amount to be had for free in Abbie's "Amerika"—available as a gift or available (and quite usable) from our discard and garbage heaps.

But most of the book involves lying, stealing and finally the resort to violence. As Abbie observes from the start in his chapter on weapons ("Piece Now"), "It's ridiculous to talk about a revolution without a few words on guns."

It is, in fact, a book pervaded with the assumptions of violence, if we understand violence to include the brutalization of consciousness as well as the brutalization of bodies. We have, many of us, rightly indicted the state as violent through and through, essentially because it consistently relates to humans (and everything else) as if they were nothing more than objects to be used, economically and militarily. Our schools prepare us to become rentable objects pulled forward in our continuous re-enlistment by our state-encour-

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aged addictions to the mirage-security of the consumer life; which is to say, our idolatrous addiction to the ancient myth (see Matthew 5 through 7 for rebuttal argument) that we-are-what-(and whom)-we-own. And so our lives unfold through a series of one- and four- and twenty-year plans, costly vacations sandwiched between long rounds of depersonalized, conveyor-belt labors. (That much sincerity oils the gears alters not at all the nature of the machine. As Frederick Douglass observed, "Slaves are expected to sing as well as work.")

Ironically Abbie is encouraging a subculture which echoes those very processes which most justify the revolution of Woodstock Nation. We too are to treat certain humans, those who do not pass the brother and sister acid test, as objects to be used and, as needed, disposed of. After all, the only ones hurt by our rip-offs are pigs and porkers, as Abbie says. And they've not only got it to spare, but *they* stole it—so all we're doing is stealing what has been stolen. Et cetera, et cetera.

Yet Abbie does make occasional contact with moral sanity. While he would have been appalled with the inconsistencies and double-standards of *Steal This Book*, St. Thomas Aquinas made a seamless case for the justification of theft— if it were the only means to sustain life short of activities more illegitimate than theft. It would thus be appropriate to steal if the only alternative were to purchase one's needs with the cash made from prostitution or the like. The premise is that life has an absolute right to survival, and that no one need cooperate in his own death or another's by failing to take those necessities which have criminally been withheld. (See *Pacem in Terris* and *Populorum Progressio.*)

It might be objected that Abbie and others are presented with no such quandary—that there are alternatives to theft which are not illegitimate. Yet too few of us have absorbed the fact that ours is a society, tragically, in which a great deal of the normal employment is, despite our fine intentions, far worse than prostitution. If one considers the distant ends to which goods and buildings are put, for example, most factory and construction work makes the trades plied on 42nd Street seem saintly in contrast. Even teaching, which has been considered very honorable, increasingly is recognized as a guard position in day-prisons for conscripted children. The medical professions, and para-professions, are—again—almost invariably but one more occasion for collaboration in a dollar-oriented industry built on the assumption that humans are less beings than machines.

Again and again, the livelihoods routinely available in our society (and in many others) are found to be positions of collaboration in injustice, however distant they may be from the consequences. On top of that, the salaries are automatically looted of tax monies used, in large measure, to purchase military hardware and to hire soldiers whose employers are convinced that humans are for burning.

Yet, even in recognizing the enormous extent to which (particularly urban) persons are driven to theft as the most honorable alternative in view, we are not driven to Abbie's conclusions, neither in terms of lifestyle of lies, theft and violence nor his division of humanity, so reflective of the culture he imagines to be countering, into humans and porkers.

The question is not so much how to survive as how to do so while building, with one's lifestyle as well as with one's resistance, a cooperative, de-centralized, nonviolent, non-polluting, non-consumption-worshiping society. The task is so enormous that it is well that the entire lifestyle contribute directly to the goal, rather than be partially composed of what we mean to oppose.

A book as practical as Abbie's but a great deal more helpful is Alicia Bay Laurel's *Living on the Earth.* (Other resources include the various editions of *The Whole Earth Catalogue.*)

Alicia's book is drawn and written —no type or half-tones—on large sheets in her own hand and begins with a sunrise. "Hello sun! You came up! We knew you would! You always do! Hooray for you! Good morning!" And it ends with a hand pointing to the heavens from a double sleeping bag: "I see the moon and the moon sees me. God bless the moon and God bless me."

Her book is dedicated to "people who would rather chop wood than work behind a desk so they can pay Pacific Gas & Electric." As she says in the introduction, "When we depend less on industrially produced consumer goods, we can live in quiet places. Our bodies

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become vigorous; we discover the serenity of living with the rhythms of the earth. We cease oppressing one another." Her patron saints are apparently Benedict and Francis instead of Abbie's St. Robin of Hood.

Between the sunrise and star-gazing pages are Alicia's recipes for weather guessing, back packing, shelter building, food doing, music making and candle casting. There are also pages on weaving, dyeing, sewing, birthing, praying, gardening, canning and massaging. And more.

One fine page is headed, "How to slow down . . ."

> find a little bit of land somewhere and plant a carrot seed. now sit down and watch it grow. When it is fully grown, pull it up and eat it.

Alicia's book is a very practical celebration of life and of the joy-potential to be found even in the difficulties of survival—a book far more revolutionary than Abbie's counter-cultural pentagonism. But she has only begun finding recipes regarding survival for those of us who find it necessary to stay on in the cities, seeking affirmative alternatives in lifestyle even while living in the cavities of our urban monsters—living in the cities because of service needs, and to carry forward the resistance. For after all, when murder and mayhem is the daily bread we Americans deliver to millions, it is not enough that some have clean hands and an operative model of how things might be; no more than one can offer the peaceful model of one's exceptional family life in explaining why one offered no interference to the knifings going on at the doorstep.

Manuals not yet written are desperately needed, borrowing some from Abbie and much from Alicia, but filling in the crucial spaces they have left empty: how to stay green in the fumes and concrete of those cities we would tear down or see deserted, how to stay human—and give birth to humanness—even in the fray of nonviolent resistance.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

REVIEWERS

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The Myth of Christian Beginnings

ROBERT I. WILKEN

Doubleday, $5.95

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Robert Wilken's new treatment of a familiar idea—that both historians and theologians have failed to adequately define the essence of Christianity in a normative way—is attractive in its simplicity, fascinating in its historical detail and a bit disturbing in its practical implications.

The life of faith is man's attempt to balance the influences of three forces: his daily experience of a both believing and unbelieving community; the accumulated impact of history and tradition; and the all-too-rare sensations of Transcendent Love. For the most part, all we have is history and one another. Although both history and the community have sometimes been faulty guides to God, we have lived with some confidence that we can in some way renew our faith through the continuity of the believing community that reaches back to Jesus.

But, according to this young Lutheran patristics scholar, the early church almost immediately lost track of its own beginnings, then allowed itself to become trapped in the Eusebian view of history—that the first generation was Christianity's golden age and therefore normative for successive generations.

Wilken insists that Christianity is historical not in the sense that a particular

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moment in history is normative but in that the essence of history is change. Therefore, the meaning of Christianity has not been determined by its first century but is still unfolding. Meanwhile, just as America has justified its own belief in its mission to redeem mankind by idealizing its past and screening out the memory of its intolerance and violence, the church, by idealizing the apostolic age, now looks backward instead of ahead and has spurned innovation and diversity.

The transition from a future-oriented community expecting the visible return of the Lord to a community in history —reaching back to the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets and living in the time between Jesus and the end-time—began with the theology of Luke. Then Hegesippus' striking but unfortunate metaphor of the church as a former virgin ravished by change reinforced, in Wilken's view, the false notion that the first generation had necessarily been the best and that the primary responsibility of later generations was to safeguard the ancient traditions. Finally, in the fourth century, Eusebius' polemical *Ecclesiastical History* interpreted Christian history as an eternal conflict between truth and innovation.

In its fundamental argument, *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* is a case for change in the faith on the grounds that there is historical precedent for change. Wilken describes the post-Chalcedon debates on the Trinity and successive religious controversies, in which the fathers always claimed to be debating the meaning of the original apostolic faith, as really debates about the present—attempts to answer new questions that had not occurred to the first generation. Meanwhile, each successive generation of historians and theologians —the Reformers and Baronius; Semler, Newman and Harnack—developed its own defensive response to change, explaining the development of dogma without drifting from the Eusebian view.

To counter the ancient metaphor of the church as virgin Wilken argues that it is better not to be a virgin: "losing one's virginity is a stop on life's way." Since Christianity began as an innovation within Judaism, since the first century writers themselves introduced new ideas to the faith, and since the meaning of Christianity is still unfolding, so should the contemporary faith be new.

I suggest that Wilken both exaggerates the present influence of the "normative" apostolic age on the contemporary church and underestimates the degree to which any institution—especially a religious one—must return to its origins as it struggles to renew its spirit. Perhaps more than Wilken admits, historical and scriptural scholarship has freed the church from the Eusebian prison. We know from Acts and Paul's epistles that the apostolic age was not a utopian age of communal love and sharing, and we realize that various Gospel passages reflect the problems of the early church rather than the actual words of Jesus. We know that our act of belief in Jesus the Lord is directed toward a Jesus mediated to us by a believing community and that this act of faith is also an expression of trust in every successive generation's essential faithfulness to God's communication of himself in the Jesus of history. Risky? Of course. But as Peter himself allegedly said to his master, none of the alternatives is more attractive.

Wilken suggests that in some way the contemporary experience of the church can be considered normative; and he urges that, as a first step in constructing a new historical picture of Christianity, Christian history be viewed as a movement *toward* something. He concludes on a somewhat rhapsodic upbeat: "If the Christian hope is a vision of God, the imperfections of the present are not deviations from an original Christian faith but the unfinished and unformed experience of men and women whose lives point to a God who is infinitely more beautiful, infinitely more gracious, and infinitely more true than anything man has ever known."

Thus a critical book becomes surprisingly and disappointingly reassuring; and a contemporary reform-minded Christian who feels that the accretions of culture and history have compromised the Gospels and made the church lethargic and fat ironically finds that the Lutheran Wilken may not share his impatience.

This may all be a matter of emphasis. Wilken would not deny that history is both change and continuity; and he does not deny the value of returning to Christianity's first moments in liturgical celebration. But one of the unforeseen results of adopting his confident stance toward the future could be complacency or aimlessness. The Gospel of Luke both fit the Christ event into history and, in a sense, put the church in command of history by integrating suffering and hope and giving the church a mission to the world. American Christianity may have forgotten how to suffer—and in this instance the apostolic age must be more normative than our own.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued on page 3)

land, and nobody knows the little boy's name, and probably no one ever will. He was so poor, so small, so skinny, ". . . the least of our brethren . . ." Perhaps we should give him a name. Perhaps we should call him Jesus, the child Jesus. CHARLES O'FLAHERTY

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